



CYPRUS' MOVEMENT OF REFUGEES & DISPLACED MOTHERS

for the restitution, conferment and respect of their fundamental human rights and their children's

ΚΙΝΗΣΗ ΠΡΟΣΦΥΓΩΝ & ΕΚΤΟΠΙΣΜΕΝΩΝ ΜΑΝΑΔΩΝ

για την πλήρη αποκατάσταση, διασφάλιση και σεβασμό των βασικών ανθρωπίνων δικαιωμάτων αυτών και των παιδιών τους

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Mrs. Beata Podgórska

President of EUNIC in Brussels

Head of the Polish Institute - Cultural Service of the Embassy of the Republic of Poland in Brussels

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Dear Mrs. Podgórska,

I write to you as the President of the Displaced Mothers of Cyprus concerning the Tanspoesie 2013 project. It has come to our attention that the poem entitled *Niobe 1974* by the Cypriot poet George Moraris has been rejected on the grounds of being political and particularly critical to the Turkish foreign policy vis a vis Cyprus. I quote your remarks *"...having consulted our Heads, the Board of our organization thinks that the Transpoesie project is not an appropriate context to present the poem Niobe. Furthermore we would like to emphasize that our organization is based in Brussels, which is a very particular city. In a few months, Brussels and Belgium will celebrate the 50th anniversary of the agreement on the Turkish immigration to Belgium. As you know, the Turkish community is one of the biggest in Brussels....."*

We were very surprised to hear that a poem of a renowned poet has been censored in such a way on European ground. The word *Poetry* comes from the Greek word *poiesis* — ποιήσις, which means *creation*. Creation and poetry speak to the minds and the hearts of people and evoke emotions, which often are culturally driven. The title of the poem, *Niobe*, is found in Ancient Greece and Homeric poetry, and speaks of a woman who lost her children in a «war» with the gods. *Niobe* is a symbol - it is the symbol of a tragic figure who unfairly loses her children and subsequently any meaning in her life. And it refers to a mass child-killing during the Turkish invasion of Cyprus in 1974. *Niobe* is not a political poem, it is just real and humane.

The people of Cyprus suffered a great tragedy back in 1974 - they have lost lives, they have become refugees in their own country and they are still in search of many missing people in a long and trying process of identifying and burying human remains even as we speak. Both Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots have suffered; and this has been the primary source of inspiration for artists on the island. The same way that great unfortunate events have shaped art around the world - from the Trojan War in Homeric Poetry to more recent wars, such as World War II and the Holocaust. Artists have talked about these events and people have accepted them as art, but also as an expression and a depiction of human pain and human suffering. People in Germany have watched movies about the Holocaust without being

offended, and it is now illegal to deny that such crimes have been executed. Polish people have suffered greatly by Germans during WWII and the least that can be done by the international community is a recognition of that suffering and the freedom of expression through art. Why are the crimes in Cyprus not worth talking about in European ground?

Let me briefly remind you that:

- On July 20th 1974 Turkey invaded and is still occupying a part of Cyprus -and hence Europe itself - on the pretext of reestablishing law and order! It is also well-documented by the United Nations that the facts on the ground prove the contrary to their so called law and order proclamation and legal pretext for the invasion and occupation of one third of the island of Cyprus in the summer of 1974. Turkey has also perpetrated ethnic cleansing and war crimes against Greek Cypriots. Ever since, the Turkish Cypriot community has suffered systematic persecution by Turkey. Thousands of them have fled the country for new countries, mainly to the west. Today they are a minority as the settlers from Turkey have outnumbered them threefold. For this I am including a most recent report endorsed by the United Nations' Human Rights Instruments HRI/CORE/CYP2012, which may give you a glimpse of what I am referring to.

Your personal sensitivity concerning the Turkish community of Brussels is well-understood. We by no means wish to insult a community and we are in favor of respect for everyone. However, we do believe that the act of censoring a poem is highly political, and it is an approach which should not be adopted in European fora. Such is the idol standing of Turkish citizens who speak no more, shout no more in the middle of the streets and squares of Turkish cities, but instead throw roses to the police forces. Even though this gesture is symbolic it is none the less highly political. Even to this simple act of protest the Turkish state responds with brutality and complete contempt regarding universal fundamental human rights by capturing them and putting them away in jail. This does not reflect the character of Turkish people, but the state shows no mercy even to its own citizens. Your mere action of rejecting *Niobe 1974* is a highly political act as well, showing favoritism and disregard to both art and history, against the UN resolutions and an EU member state.

We believe your act of not allowing a poet present his poem in Europe is unfair. And we sincerely hope you will make up for it, in the name of freedom of speech and respect for art and poetry.

Μια Νιόβη δίχως δάκρυα
Markella Isaia-Chakka
a European citizen and an IDP from the occupied Lefka-Xeros-Morphou

Cc: Mr. Kyriakos Kenevezos - Minister of the Cyprus Ministry of Education and Culture
Mrs. Eleni Theocharous – Europarliamentarian
Mr. George Moraris – poet
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